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T.R.A. DOCKET ROOM
September 3, 2004

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VIA HAND DELIVERY

Hon. Pat Miller, Chairman
Tennessee Regulatory Authority
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37238

Re: *Petition of DIECA Communications, Inc., d/b/a Covad Communications Company for Arbitration of Interconnection Agreement Amendment with BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc., Pursuant to Section 252(b) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*
Docket No. 04-00186

Dear Chairman Miller:

Enclosed are the original and fourteen copies of BellSouth's *Brief in Support of Proposed Interconnection Agreement Amendment*. Copies of the enclosed are being provided to counsel of record.

Very truly yours,

Guy M. Hicks

GMH:ch

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY
Nashville, Tennessee

In Re: *Petition of DIECA Communications, Inc., d/b/a Covad Communications Company for Arbitration of Interconnection Agreement Amendment with BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc., Pursuant to Section 252(b) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*

Docket No. 04-00186

**BELLSOUTH'S BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF
PROPOSED INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT AMENDMENT**

INTRODUCTION

This proceeding requires the resolution of a straightforward legal question – what is BellSouth's legal obligation concerning Covad's access to the high frequency portion of the local loop ("HFPL" or "line sharing")? The Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") and applicable federal rules upheld by the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit have indisputably answered this question – Covad is only entitled to line sharing on a grandfathered basis pursuant to a transitional mechanism. Despite the binding and unambiguous federal rules, Covad stubbornly insists that it is entitled to line sharing forever, by cobbling together a nonsensical reliance upon Section 271 of the 1996 Act.¹ BellSouth requests that the Authority answer the question by holding that Covad is entitled to line sharing consistent with the transition mechanism established by the FCC – nothing more, nothing less.

¹ References to "the Act" or "the 1996 Act" mean the Communications Act of 1934, as amended by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which can be found at 47 U.S.C. § 151 *et seq.*

BACKGROUND

The Interconnection Agreement

BellSouth and Covad are parties to a regionwide interconnection agreement ("Agreement") that requires BellSouth to provide Covad access to the HFPL as an unbundled network element ("UNE"). Following the issuance of the FCC's *Triennial Review Order*,² BellSouth sought to amend the parties' Agreement. In relevant part, BellSouth sought to modify the provisions of the Agreement that relate to the HFPL.

The High Frequency Portion of the Local Loop

The FCC created the HFPL UNE in its December 9, 1999 *Line Sharing Order*.³ There, the FCC amended its unbundling rules, "to require incumbent LECs to provide unbundled access to a new network element, the high frequency *portion* of the local loop. This will enable competitive LECs to compete with incumbent LECs to provide to consumers xDSL-based services through telephone lines that the competitive LECs can share with incumbent LECs. The provision of xDSL-based service by a competitive LEC and voiceband service by an incumbent LEC on the same loop is frequently called 'line sharing.'" *Line Sharing Order*, ¶ 4 (emphasis added). The FCC's language in the *Line Sharing Order* made clear that the newly created HFPL UNE consisted of one "portion" of a local loop.

² Report and Order and Order on Remand and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, *Review of the Section 251 Unbundling Obligations of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers*, 18 FCC Rcd 16978 (2003) ("*Triennial Review Order*"), *vacated in part and remanded, United States Telecom Ass'n v. FCC*, 359 F.3d 554 (D.C. Cir. 2004).

³ Third Report and Order in CC Docket No. 98-147 and Fourth Report and Order in CC Docket No. 96-98, *Deployment of Wireline Services Offering Advanced Telecommunications Capability, Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, 14 FCC Rcd 20912 ("*Line Sharing Order*"), *vacated and remanded, USTA v. FCC*, 290 F.3d 415 (D.C. Cir. 2002) ("*USTA I*"), *cert. denied*, 538 U.S. 940 (2003).

In May 2002, the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit addressed the FCC's new HFPL UNE. In *USTA I*, the D.C. Circuit vacated and remanded the *Line Sharing Order*, finding that the FCC failed to consider intermodal competition, specifically the relevance of competition in broadband services via cable and satellite services. *USTA I*, 290 F.3d at 428. The D.C. Circuit's vacatur of line sharing was stayed until the issuance of the FCC's *Triennial Review Order*.

In the *Triennial Review Order*, the FCC decided that the HFPL was no longer a UNE. The FCC explained, "allowing competitive LECs unbundled access to the whole loop and to line splitting but not requiring the HFPL to be separately unbundled creates better competitive incentives than the alternatives." *Triennial Review Order*, ¶ 260. In doing so, the FCC reversed its earlier finding that line sharing would level the competitive playing field; instead, the FCC explained "rules requiring line sharing may skew competitive CLECs' incentives toward providing a broadband-only service to mass market consumers, rather than a voice-only service or, perhaps more importantly, a bundled voice and xDSL service offering." *Id.*, ¶ 261.

The FCC's Line Sharing Plan

In eliminating line sharing as a UNE, the FCC acknowledged that a number of CLECs had relied upon access to the HFPL to provide service. *Id.*, ¶ 264. Consequently, to provide carriers adequate time to implement alternatives, the FCC adopted a three-year transition plan for new line sharing arrangements. *Id.* The FCC also grandfathered existing line sharing arrangements. *Id.* The FCC's decision impacts BellSouth and Covad in three ways. First, Covad's line sharing

arrangements that were in service as of October 1, 2003 will be "grandfathered" until the FCC's next biennial review. Covad will pay the same amount to serve those customers as it did on October 1, 2003. Second, any new line sharing customers Covad adds from October 2, 2003 through October 1, 2004 are subject to a three-year transitional period and transitional rates.⁴ Third, pursuant to the transitional plan, after October 1, 2004, Covad cannot request new line sharing arrangements. *Id.*, ¶ 265; also 47 CFR § 57.319(a)(i)(B). The third aspect of the FCC's line sharing transition plan is what has created the need for Commission action on an expedited basis.

The Parties' Dispute

After the FCC issued its *Triennial Review Order*, communications between BellSouth and Covad occurred.⁵ BellSouth has requested an amendment to the parties' Agreement that incorporates the FCC's transitional and grandfathering line sharing mechanism. BellSouth's proposed amendment states, consistent with federal rules, that after October 1, 2004, Covad will no longer be able to request new line sharing arrangements. Covad has refused to accept BellSouth's proposed language. Instead, Covad's petition proposes contract language that would require BellSouth to "agree to offer" access to the HFPL "on an unbundled basis in accordance with its obligations under Section 271 ... beginning October 1, 2004."⁶

⁴ Under the FCC's transition plan, Covad should have been paying higher rates for any customers added during this timeframe. Because the Agreement has not yet been modified, however, Covad has enjoyed the benefit of line sharing at the current monthly recurring rate at \$0.61

⁵ The details concerning the parties' communications have been addressed in previous filings; to avoid repetition BellSouth incorporates by reference its prior pleadings.

⁶ The parties plan to address jurisdictional arguments during the second phase of this proceeding, if necessary, and BellSouth reserves its right to do so. By way of explanation,

BellSouth has not negotiated, pursuant to Sections 251 and 252 of the Act, any access to the HFPL other than as specified by the FCC in the federal rules.

Although the *Triennial Review Order* and the subsequent rules clearly outline the means by which Covad may access the HFPL, Covad has refused to amend the parties' Agreement and effectuate the FCC's plan. Without such an amendment, Covad apparently believes that it can continue ordering new line sharing arrangements at UNE prices after October 1, 2004, an outcome clearly in conflict with binding federal law. BellSouth respectfully requests that the Authority resolve this matter by ordering Covad to abide by the applicable federal rules.⁷

DISCUSSION

I. BellSouth is Only Obligated to Provide Covad with Access to Line Sharing Under the FCC's Transitional Mechanism

In the *Triennial Review Order*, the FCC rejected its prior finding that lack of separate access to the HFPL would cause impairment. TRO, ¶ 258. The FCC issued detailed findings to support its decision. Notably, the FCC recognized that all potential revenues from the full functionality of a loop would offset the costs associated with purchasing the entire loop. *Id.* The FCC also recognized that

BellSouth has contractually agreed that either party may petition the Authority for resolution for certain disputes, which Covad has done. Thus, this dispute is properly before the Authority. By submitting briefs to the Authority on the issue of access to line sharing, however, BellSouth is not waiving any arguments it has about whether the Authority can actually order the parties to include Covad's proposed language in an interconnection agreement (which it should not in any event, as will be explained more fully herein).

⁷ In resolving this dispute, BellSouth is not seeking any order that addresses the parties' ability to participate in independent negotiations concerning access to line sharing on a commercial basis, a matter that is not before the Authority. BellSouth supports *voluntary* commercial negotiations. The question before the Authority focuses on *the legal obligation* concerning access to line sharing, which is explicitly and unambiguously addressed by binding federal rules. By doing so, BellSouth is not agreeing that a state commission has jurisdiction to decide any questions concerning BellSouth's obligations under Section 271 or to arbitrate disputes about the rates at which elements available under Section 271 will be provided.

CLECs interested in broadband alone could obtain such access from other carriers through line splitting. *Id.*, ¶ 259. Moreover, the FCC observed that because most states had priced the HFPL at zero, competitive incentives were distorted in favor of CLECs purchasing only the HFPL as compared to carriers purchasing the entire loop. *Id.*, ¶ 260. This distortion skewed carriers' incentives toward providing only broadband service instead of bundled voice and DSL. *Id.*, ¶ 261. In addition, line sharing discouraged innovative arrangements between voice CLECs and data CLECs and also discouraged product differentiation between ILEC and CLEC offerings. *Id.* Finally, the FCC acknowledged substantial intermodal competition exists in broadband service, particularly with cable modem service, and, to some degree, with third generation wireless service, satellite service, and broadband over power lines. *Id.*, ¶ 262.

After detailing the numerous reasons for eliminating unbundled access to line sharing, the FCC created a transition and grandfathering mechanism to ensure carriers like Covad would have adequate time to implement new processes and procedures, design new product offerings, and negotiate new arrangements *to replace* line sharing. *Id.*, ¶ 264 (emphasis added). The FCC found it appropriate to fashion a lengthy transition period to allow CLECs to move their customers to alternative arrangements and modify their business practices and operations on a going forward basis. *Id.*, ¶ 266.

II. BellSouth Is Not Required to Provide Access to Line Sharing for New Customers After October 1, 2004.

Despite the fact that the FCC found that line sharing did not satisfy the impairment standard under Section 251 and outlined a transition plan for line sharing, Covad contends that it is entitled to continued access to line sharing in perpetuity under Section 271, checklist item 4. The Authority can and should resolve this matter by simply relying on binding federal rules alone, without wading into the section 271 regulatory morass into which Covad would lead it.

However, even if it were proper for a state commission to look to Section 271, and it is clearly not, Covad's reliance upon checklist item 4 to support its position that line sharing is required by Section 271, is without reasonable basis. Indeed, Covad's argument is contradicted by the plain language of checklist item 4. That language requires access or interconnection that includes:

(4) Local loop transmission from the central office to the customer's premises, unbundled from local switching or other services.⁸

The key point is that checklist item 4 explicitly requires the provision of a loop. Checklist item 4 does not require subloops, portions of the loop (high frequency or otherwise), or isolated functionalities of the loop. Clearly, the requirement is for the provision of a whole loop, nothing more and nothing less.

Covad's claim that line sharing involves the loop and, therefore, falls within the rubric of Section 271, also is inconsistent with the FCC's analytical framework in its *Line Sharing Order*, in the *Triennial Review Order* and, as indicated below, completely misstates the FCC's various Section 271 decisions. The FCC decided

⁸ 47 U.S.C. § 271(c)(2)(B)(iv).

almost four years ago in the *Line Sharing Order* to designate the high frequency portion of the loop as an unbundled network element, *separate and apart from the loop itself*. The FCC continued analyzing the HFPL and the loop as separate unbundled network elements in its *Triennial Review Order*.

Specifically, the FCC found that competing carriers that request stand-alone copper loops are generally impaired on a national basis (*Triennial Review Order*, ¶ 248), while also finding that carriers that request HFPL are not impaired under any circumstances. (*Id.*, ¶ 258) Covad's contention that the FCC would conduct separate analyses of line sharing and whole loops for purposes of applying Section 251, but combine the two provisions together without distinction for purposes of applying Section 271, defies logic. Covad's conclusion is all the more illogical when considering the FCC specifically found line sharing to be competitive (i.e., it did not meet the impairment test), but reached a different conclusion as to whole loops. Furthermore, as discussed below, neither the *Triennial Review Order* nor other FCC decisions support Covad's faulty conclusion.

A. Covad's Reliance on the FCC's Section 271 Decisions Is Misplaced

Covad primarily relies upon the FCC's Section 271 decisions to try to justify its conclusion that line sharing is a checklist item 4 requirement. These decisions, however, do not support Covad's position.

First, Covad's argument conveniently ignores the first two FCC decisions granting long distance authority to a BOC. The FCC's *Line Sharing Order* was released on December 9, 1999, shortly before the FCC's *Bell Atlantic New York*

Order,⁹ which was released on December 22, 1999. In the *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, the FCC explained that Verizon (formerly Bell Atlantic) was not required to comply with the new unbundling rules established in the *UNE Remand* proceedings and was not required to demonstrate that it complied with line sharing. *Bell Atlantic New York Order* at n. 70. The FCC reached a similar conclusion in the *SWBT Texas Order*,¹⁰ finding that “[f]or the purpose of evaluating whether this application satisfies Section 271, we do not require SWBT to prove that it has implemented the ... modifications necessary to accommodate requests for access to the line sharing unbundled network element ...” (*SWBT Texas Order*, ¶ 321). If line sharing actually had been required in order to receive long distance authority under checklist item 4, then the FCC could not have granted Verizon and SBC Section 271 authority.

Second, Covad’s assertion likewise ignores other Section 271 decisions by the FCC. In the *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order*¹¹ and the *Qwest Arizona Order*,¹² both of which were issued after the *Triennial Review Order* became effective, the FCC explained that as part of the required showing, an applicant must satisfy the FCC’s old rules concerning UNEs. (*SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order*, ¶ 10; *Qwest*

⁹ *In the Matter of Application by Bell Atlantic New York for Authorization under Section 271 of the Communications Act To Provide In-Region, InterLATA Service in the State of New York*, CC Docket No. 99-295, 15 FCC Rcd 3953 (Dec. 22, 1999) (“*Bell Atlantic New York Order*”).

¹⁰ *In the Matter of Application by SBC Communications, Inc., et al ; Pursuant to Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to Provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in Texas*, CC Docket no 00-65, 15 FCC Rcd 18354 (June 30, 2000) (“*SWBT Texas Order*”).

¹¹ *Joint Application by SBC Communications, Inc , et al , for Authorization to provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin*, WC Docket No. 03-167, *Memorandum Opinion and Order*, FCC 03-243 (Oct. 15, 2003) (“*SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order*”).

¹² *Application by Qwest Comm. International, Inc , for Authorization to Provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in Arizona*, WC Docket No 03-194, *Memorandum Opinion and Order* (Dec. 3, 2003) (“*Qwest Arizona Order*”).

Arizona Order ¶ 7.) The FCC then listed seven UNEs that incumbent LECs are obliged to provide. The first UNE on the list is “local loops and subloops.” The seventh UNE on this list is the “high frequency portion of the loop.” (*Id.*)

The *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order* and the *Qwest Arizona Order* demonstrate that, even under the FCC’s old unbundling rules, the loop and the HFPL were treated as separate elements. The FCC’s delineation of the loop and HFPL as separate elements began in the *Line Sharing Order* and has continued to this day in the *Triennial Review Order*. Thus, while checklist item 4 of Section 271 may obligate BellSouth to provide access to loops, this obligation does not extend to providing line sharing.

In addition to the fact that the FCC’s section 271 decisions clearly distinguish the loop and the HFPL, these orders also demonstrate that the line sharing analysis in these orders relates to the FCC’s unbundling obligations as contained in *federal rules* and is not an implicit recognition of a *statutory obligation*. That the FCC analyzed line sharing under its *rules* and not under the Act is clear from language in the *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order*:

Based on the evidence in the record, we conclude ... that SBC provides unbundled local loops in accordance with the requirements of Section 271 *and our rules*. Our conclusion is based on our review of SBC’s performance for all loop types which include voice grade loops, xDSL capable loops, digital loops and high capacity loops, *as well as* our review of FCC’s processes for hot cut provisioning, and line sharing and line splitting.

SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order ¶ 142; *see also Qwest Arizona Order* ¶ 26 (emphasis added).

It is readily apparent the FCC's analysis relating to hot cuts, line sharing and line splitting is *not based upon the requirements of checklist item 4 as expressly articulated in the Act, but rather upon the FCC's rules*. Neither a hot cut, line sharing, nor line splitting is a loop; rather, these are loop processes. With respect to line sharing specifically, the rule in question is the FCC's former rule (pre-*Triennial Review Order*) that required line sharing on an unbundled basis pursuant to Section 251.

Covad's argument that line sharing is part of checklist item 4 (despite the actual language of checklist item 4), is contradicted by the language in the *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order* and the *Qwest Arizona Order* referring to the requirements *of the FCC's rules*. Stated simply, if a requirement to provide line sharing (and line splitting and hot cut provisioning) resides in checklist item 4, rather than the FCC's unbundling rules, then there is nothing left to be considered as part of the checklist item 4 analysis that *does* arise from the FCC's rules, which would render the citation to the rules meaningless.

The FCC's orders make two points clear. First, the FCC distinguished the loop UNE from the HFPL UNE in its *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order* in discussing unbundling required under checklist item two. Second, by referring to its rules in its checklist item 4 discussion, the FCC has demonstrated it would analyze both the actual checklist item 4 loop provisioning requirement *and related requirements (such as line sharing) that arise from the unbundling rules* (i.e., the same unbundling that is the topic of checklist item 2). Consequently, Covad cannot

reasonably rely on the FCC's Section 271 decisions to demonstrate that line sharing is a checklist item 4 requirement.

The FCC's Section 271 decisions concerning BellSouth are consistent with its *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order* and its *Qwest Arizona Order*. In evaluating BellSouth's Section 271 applications, the FCC discussed line sharing in connection with applicable *rules* rather than a statutory requirement. For example, at paragraph 218 of the *BellSouth Georgia/Louisiana Order*¹³ the FCC said:

... BellSouth demonstrates that it provides unbundled local loops in accordance with the requirements of Section 271 *and our rules*. Our conclusion is based on our review of BellSouth's performance for all loop types, which include, as in past Section 271 orders, voice grade loops, hot cut provisioning, xDSL-capable loops, high capacity loops, and digital loops, and our review of BellSouth's processes for line sharing and line splitting.

Similar language appears in paragraph 232 of the *BellSouth Multistate Order*¹⁴ and in paragraph 132 of the *BellSouth Tennessee/Florida Order*:¹⁵

... BellSouth demonstrates that it provides unbundled local loops in accordance with the requirements of Section 271 *and our rules*. As in past Section 271 orders, our conclusion is based on our review of BellSouth's performance for all loop types, including voice grade loops, xDSL-capable loops, high capacity loops, and digital loops, hot cut, line sharing, and line splitting processes.

Third, Covad may erroneously claim that line sharing must inherently fall within checklist item 4, simply because the FCC's checklist item 4 analysis in the

¹³ *In the Matter of Joint Application by BellSouth Corp et al. for Provision of In-Region, InterLATA Services in Georgia and Louisiana*, CC Docket No. 02-35, 17 FCC Rcd 9018 (May 15, 2002) ("BellSouth Georgia/Louisiana Order").

¹⁴ *In the Matter of Joint Application by BellSouth Corp et al. for Provision of In-Region, InterLATA Services in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina*, WC Docket No. 02-150, 17 FCC Rcd 17595 (Sept. 18, 2002) ("BellSouth Multistate Order").

¹⁵ *Joint Application by BellSouth Corp. et al for Authorization to provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in Florida and Tennessee*, WC Docket No. 02-37, *Memorandum Opinion and Order* (Dec. 19, 2003) ("BellSouth Florida/Tennessee Order")

SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order and in the *Qwest Arizona Order* included a consideration of line sharing after the issuance of the *Triennial Review Order*. Any such argument is misplaced. In the FCC's recent Section 271 decisions, it acknowledged that it had adopted new unbundling rules as part of the *Triennial Review Order* on October 2, 2003, but explained that it was basing its decisions on the *former unbundling rules*. *SBC Illinois/Indiana/Ohio Order*, ¶¶ 10-11; *Qwest Arizona Order*, ¶ 8. Thus, when the FCC considered both the actual checklist item 4 requirements *and* the loop-related requirements of the FCC's rules, it applied the old unbundling rules (under which, unlike the current rules, line sharing was required to be provided as a UNE).

B. The *Triennial Review Order* Does Not Require Access to Line Sharing As A Section 271 Obligation

Although Covad has no reasonable basis for relying upon the FCC's Section 271 decisions to justify its quest for access to line sharing, BellSouth anticipates Covad will argue the *Triennial Review Order* did not change or modify the existence of line sharing as a checklist item 4 requirement. Any such argument suffers from the fatal flaw that because line sharing is not a checklist item 4 requirement, the FCC would not need to modify a non-existent obligation. Further, even if Covad makes such a claim, it is clear that the FCC consistently treats line sharing in a way that distinguishes it from the loop in the *Triennial Review Order* by separately referring to the loop-UNE, *and not* line sharing.

In the *Triennial Review Order*, the FCC observed that Section 251 and Section 271 operate independently. In relevant part, at Paragraph 654 of the

Triennial Review Order the FCC made clear that checklist items 4, 5, 6, and 10 only “impose access requirements regarding *loop, transport, switching, and signaling*” (*Triennial Review Order*, ¶ 654.) *Line sharing is never mentioned by the FCC as a requirement of any checklist item.*

Because line sharing is never listed as a requirement, any reliance Covad places upon paragraph 659 of the *Triennial Review Order* as bolstering its position is unjustified. Paragraph 659 suggests that Section 271 obligations may exist independently of section 251 obligations, however, paragraph 659 does nothing to suggest that a *line sharing* Section 271 obligation exists to begin with. The reality is that there is no mention of line sharing at any point in the fifteen-paragraph discussion of Section 271 obligations contained within the *Triennial Review Order*. (See *Triennial Review Order*, ¶¶ 653-667.) Thus, to the extent that Covad’s argument is that the FCC intended the term “loop” to include line sharing, even though the FCC never states such an intention, is a strained interpretation that falls apart upon examination of the distinction between the UNE-loop and the UNE-line sharing.

Likewise, Covad may argue that, because the *Triennial Review Order* contains a more granular analysis of network elements in the context of Section 251 than within the fifteen paragraph discussion of Section 271, this *must* mean that the term “loop” is intended to include line sharing by implication wherever it appears. This argument also fails. In the final analysis, without any actual language within the *Triennial Review Order* that supports Covad’s position, such a “granularity” argument is nothing more than reliance upon the structure of the

Triennial Review rather than upon its express holdings. Such reliance cannot stand given the language of the Act, the *Triennial Review Order* in its entirety, and other orders of the FCC.

III. Decisions Addressing BellSouth's Self Effectuating Enforcement Mechanism ("SEEM") Plan Do Not Provide Covad with the Right to Add New Line Sharing Customers After October 1, 2004

Despite the fact that the federal rules unambiguously govern Covad's access rights to the HFPL, Covad may argue that prior decisions in BellSouth's region support its proposed amendment to the parties' interconnection agreement. Any such argument is without foundation.

Following the issuance of the *Triennial Review Order*, BellSouth sought to modify its Self-Effectuating Enforcement Mechanism ("SEEM") plan to remove penalties associated with line sharing. In connection with such proceedings, the state commissions in Georgia and North Carolina initially issued orders that included language recognizing a Section 271, checklist item 4 line sharing obligation. Both decisions were subsequently modified, however, which means that Covad cannot rely on these orders to circumvent the federal rules.

On reconsideration, the Georgia Commission, on its own motion, modified its order "to remove ... an independent and ongoing access obligation under Section 271." *Order on Reconsideration*, GPSC Docket No. 7892-U, *In re: Performance Measurements for Telecommunications, Unbundling, and Resale* (Mar. 25, 2004). The Georgia Commission recognized "it makes more sense to address this question, if and when necessary, at a point when more information on the FCC's intent is available." *Id.* p. 3 of 4. Similarly, the North Carolina Commission struck

an entire paragraph from its initial order in Docket No. P-100, Sub 133k, meaning it relied solely upon the federal rules in its decision. *See* p. 28, *Order on Reconsideration*, NCUC Docket No. P-100, Sub 133k, *In re: Generic Docket to Address Performance Measurements and Enforcement Mechanisms*, (July 13, 2004).

In addition, if Covad contends the initial decisions from Georgia or North Carolina relating to BellSouth's SEEM plan support its position here, it will have to distinguish decisions from Florida and Alabama. The Florida Commission recognized that BellSouth is no longer required to accept new line sharing services after October 2004, while the Alabama Commission recognized BellSouth was no longer required to provide access to the HFPL as a UNE. *See Order Denying the CLEC Coalition's Motion to Strike and BellSouth's Amended Motion to Modify SEEM Plan*, FPSC Docket No. 000121A-TP, Order No. PSC-04-0511-PAA-TP, p. 12 (May 19, 2004) ("BellSouth is not obligated to offer new line sharing services as UNEs after October 2004"); *and Order Denying Motion to Modify SEEM Plan*, APSC Docket 25835 (Feb. 13, 2004) ("BellSouth is correct in noting that the FCC concluded in its *TRO* that CLECs are no longer impaired without unbundled access to line sharing").¹⁶

¹⁶ The Kentucky Public Service Commission also recognized the *Triennial Review Order* included a three-year transition period for line sharing. *See* Order p. 2, KPSC Case No. 2001-00105, *In re. Investigation Concerning the Proprietary Provision of InterLATA Services by BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc Pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996* (Dec. 15, 2003). The Kentucky Commission noted that "BellSouth is still required to provide new line sharing arrangements and maintain existing ones", an accurate statement on December 15, 2003. Of course, as set forth herein, such a statement would not be accurate after October 1, 2004.

Because none of the state commissions in BellSouth's region, including the Georgia and North Carolina Commissions, recognized any Section 271 obligation to provide access to the HFPL after October 1, 2004, Covad cannot justifiably cite to these decisions as support for its position. In any event, the Authority can and should address the current dispute between BellSouth and Covad by simply relying on the federal rules.

IV. Decisions Addressing Verizon's Wholesale Tariffs Do Not Provide Covad with the Right to Add New Line Sharing Customers After October 1, 2004

During the course of an informal conference between the parties in Kentucky, Covad referred to decisions outside of BellSouth's region and suggested such orders recognize a section 271 line sharing obligation. Based on Covad's reference to these decisions, BellSouth expects it will cite to these decisions to support its request for continued access to line sharing in perpetuity. Any such reliance is misplaced.¹⁷

Specifically, Covad referenced decisions from Pennsylvania and Maine. The *Pennsylvania Decision*, Case No. R-00038871C0001, Order (July 8, 2004) (*Pennsylvania Decision*) is factually distinguishable from this proceeding and fails to justify the relief Covad seeks. In Pennsylvania, Verizon had previously filed a tariff through which it offered unbundled network elements. Following the *Triennial Review Order*, Verizon filed revisions to remove line sharing and other UNEs from its tariff, which revisions were not permitted to take effect. On appeal, the Pennsylvania Commission declined to extend the initial suspension of Verizon's

¹⁷ The parties jointly requested the Authority resolve the issue of access to line sharing after the submission of one round of briefs. Because the parties do not plan to file reply briefs, BellSouth has addressed arguments it anticipates Covad will make here.

tariff. While that commission stated, in passing, that “it is a reasonable interpretation of Checklist item #4 to also include the HFPL of the local loop,” it also recognized a state commission’s role under Section 271 is “consultative and that the ultimate adjudicative authority lies with the FCC.” *Pennsylvania Decision*, p. 17. In addition, the Pennsylvania Commission noted “this Commission does not have the authority to ultimately construe the statutory requirements for Checklist item # 4.” *Id.*

Unlike Verizon, BellSouth is not seeking to modify a wholesale tariff. To the extent that Covad tries to assert the *Pennsylvania Decision* is somehow tangentially analogous to this case, its assertion cannot stand. Because the *Pennsylvania Decision* has been remanded to an administrative law judge for further proceedings, it may be subsequently clarified. At most, the *Pennsylvania Decision* ultimately stands for the unremarkable proposition that a state commission outside of BellSouth’s territory elected to temporarily suspend a proposed Verizon tariff seeking to delete access to line sharing, while recognizing that ultimate authority lies with the FCC.

During the same informal conference, Covad also referenced a decision in Maine. There is no final commission order in Maine that supports Covad’s position in this docket. In Maine, a Hearing Examiner recommended a finding that “Verizon must continue to provide CLECs with access to line sharing in order [t]o comply with Checklist Item No. 4 of Section 271 ... however, we will not exercise any authority ... to set rates for 271-based UNEs such as line sharing and will leave

those issues to the FCC ..." July 23, 2004 Examiner's Report, Docket No. 2002-682.

The Maine Commission considered the Hearing Examiner's recommendation during its August 12, 2004 open meeting. Although the Maine Commission has yet to issue a written order, the Commission voted *not* to require line sharing as a Section 271 obligation, recognizing that defining the scope of Section 271 obligations is a matter properly left to the FCC. Consequently, Covad has no justifiable basis to rely upon a decision from Maine to bolster its argument in this proceeding.

V. The FCC's August 20, 2004 Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Does Not Provide Covad with the Right to Add New Line Sharing Customers After October 1, 2004.

On August 20, 2004, the FCC released its *Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* in Docket Nos. WC 04-313 and CC 01-338 ("Interim Order"). The FCC's *Interim Order* seeks comments on whether Section 271 unbundling obligations need to be clarified or modified in light of *USTA II*. See *Interim Order*, at n. 38 (acknowledging BellSouth's Emergency Petition for Declaratory Ruling and Preemption of State Action, WC Docket No. 04-245). Significantly, however, while recent articles have suggested some individual FCC commissioners may have thought about modifying the FCC's rules regarding line sharing, the *Interim Order* contains no such modification. See, e.g., *Communications Daily*, Aug. 4, 2004, "Powell Seeks Copps, Adelstein Agreement on Interim TRO Rules." Moreover, while the FCC acknowledged that BellSouth's petition raised Section 271 concerns, it did not reach any tentative or preliminary conclusions that impact the

applicable line sharing rules.¹⁸ Consequently, the only outcome in this proceeding that would be consistent with binding federal law is to find that BellSouth's obligation to provide Covad access to line sharing is strictly governed by the FCC's grandfathering and transitional mechanism as set forth in the FCC's rules.

VI. Covad Cannot Reasonably Rely Upon State Law to Circumvent the Federal Rules

In addressing the legal issue of access to line sharing, state statutes cannot negate the clear mandate of the federal rules. Covad's proposed line sharing contract amendment expressly refers to Section 271 and does not cite to state statutes. Thus, to the extent that Covad attempts to raise state law issues, any such arguments exceed the scope of this proceeding. Moreover, any reliance on state law would be without basis.

Under the *Triennial Review Order*, state commissions are "precluded from enacting or maintaining a regulation or law pursuant to state authority that thwarts or frustrates the federal regime adopted in [the *Triennial Review Order*]." *Triennial Review Order* ¶ 192. More specifically, any decision purporting to require BellSouth to provide line sharing when the FCC has unambiguously reversed its prior finding that the HFPL constituted a UNE would be preempted: "If a decision pursuant to state law were to require the unbundling of a network element for which the Commission has either found no impairment – and thus has found that unbundling that element would conflict with the limits in [section] 251(d)(2) – or otherwise declined to require unbundling on a national basis, we believe it unlikely

¹⁸ See also Brief for Federal Respondents at 17, *NARUC, et al. v USTA, et al.*, Nos. 04-12, 04-15, and 04-18 (S. Ct. filed Sep. 1, 2004) (FCC stated the D.C. Circuit "correctly upheld" its decision to phase out line sharing requirements)

that such [a] decision would fail to conflict with and ‘substantially prevent’ implementation of the federal regime, in violation of section 251(d)(3)(C).” *Id.* ¶ 195; *see id.* ¶ 196 (“[W]e find that the limitations embodied in section 251(d)(3)(B) and (C) will prevent states from taking actions under state law that conflict with our framework and create disincentives for investment.”). In sum, as the FCC explained to the D.C. Circuit, its decisions in the *Triennial Review Order* “reflect[] a ‘balance’ struck by the agency between the costs and benefits of unbundling [an] element. Any state rule that struck a different balance would conflict with federal law, thereby warranting preemption.”¹⁹

A recent decision in Wisconsin aptly demonstrates that any decision requiring access to line sharing under state law would be preempted. In *Wisconsin Bell v. AT&T Communications of Wis.*, No. 03 Civ. 0671 (W.D. Wis. July 1, 2004) (“*Wisconsin Decision*”), the ILEC challenged a state commission arbitration decision requiring the ILEC to provide data services to a CLEC’s UNE customers. The state commission decision did not “expressly require [the ILEC] to unbundle the [high-frequency portion of the loop] or the [low-frequency portion of the loop],” but did require the ILEC to “continue to provide all existing data services.” Slip op. at 20 (quoting interconnection agreement).

The federal district court concluded that the state commission’s decision was contrary to the FCC’s regulations, specifically the *Triennial Review Order*, and

¹⁹ Brief for Respondents at 93, *United States Telecom Ass’n v. FCC*, Nos. 00-1012 *et al.*, (D.C. Cir. filed Jan. 16, 2004) (citations omitted), *and* Brief for Federal Respondents at 21, *NARUC, et al. v. USTA, et al.*, Nos. 04-12, 04-15, and 04-18 (S. Ct. filed Sep. 1, 2004) (“state laws or rulings inconsistent with the FCC’s unbundling regulations would be inconsistent with the Congressionally authorized implementation of the requirements of Section 251 ... and hence preempted”)

thus was inconsistent with federal law. The court explained that the obligation imposed by the state commission was “functionally identical to compelled unbundling of the [high-frequency portion of the loop] and [the low-frequency portion of the loop]” and thus was a “thinly veiled unbundling of the local loop portions which was expressly rejected by the FCC.” *Id.* Because the result imposed by the state commission was equivalent to the proposal that the FCC considered and rejected in the *Triennial Review Order*, it violated federal law. See *id.* at 20-22.

The court expressly rejected the argument that “this [is] a circumstance where [the state commission] might have exercised its residual state authority to impose the additional unbundling.” *Slip op.* at 21. The agreement provision was “directly inconsistent with the FCC regulations implementing the [1996 Act] and the reasons underlying those requirements.” *Id.* Given the conflict between the state commission arbitration decision and the FCC’s conclusions in the *Triennial Review Order*, the court found the ILEC was “entitled to a determination that the agreement provision compelling it or its subsidiary to provide DSL service when defendant AT&T provides voice service does not comply with the [1996 Act].” *Id.*

CONCLUSION

Four years after the FCC created its high frequency portion of the loop UNE and after its creation was invalidated by the D.C. Circuit, the FCC determined that line sharing fails to satisfy the impairment standard and strictly limited continued access to line sharing. The FCC created a grandfathering and transitional mechanism and declined to require access to line sharing for new customers after

October 1, 2004. Rather than accepting the FCC's decision and incorporating the terms of the federal rules into the parties' Agreement, Covad seeks to wish it away through a Section 271 checklist item 4 argument that is contradicted by the FCC's initial orders granting ILECs long distance authority. The Authority should resolve this dispute by entering an order requiring Covad to abide by the binding federal rules.

Respectfully submitted,

BELLSOUTH TELECOMMUNICATIONS, INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy M. Hicks", is written over a horizontal line.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on September 3, 2004, a copy of the foregoing document was served on the following, via the method indicated:

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